

REMARKS

The various issues set forth in the Office Action are addressed in turn below.

Claim Rejections 35 U.S.C. § 102(a)

The examiner has maintained the rejection of claims 1-8 and 16-20 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,558,605 to Volkert. The examiner has alleged the Volkert patent recites all of the features of claim 1 (as well as those of claims 2-8 and 16-20). By way of this Amendment, Applicant has amended claim 1 to more clearly define the invention and to incorporate features previously found in claim 2. Claim 2 has been cancelled and claims 3 and 8, which previously depended from claim 2, have been amended to depend from claim 1.

Applicant has always maintained that Volkert fails to teach clamping mechanisms that are individually/independently biased towards a closed position. The Examiner comments in the Response to Arguments that “This is not found to be persuasive as the prior art clearly demonstrates clamping mechanisms that are individually controlled by separate actuating means” which the Examiner previously referenced as (234,236,238,266). From this comment, it is apparent that when the Examiner is referring to a “clamping mechanism”, she is referring to the bank of grippers 40 of which there are three such banks shown in Fig. 1, and as shown in Fig. 6C, each of which are controlled by a separate actuating means (234, 236, 238). While it is questionable whether the separate actuating means (234, 236, 238) control the opening and closing of these clamping mechanisms (banks) individually (“independently” as had been claimed) as they are connected via a single shaft (242), it must be pointed out that Applicant’s “clamping mechanism” is not the bank of clamps but rather the individual clamp (12)

of which there are a plurality in each cartridge (10) as shown in Fig. 1A. In this regard, Applicant's claim 1 is directed to a clamping cartridge which is generally the equivalent of one of the banks of grippers in Volkert.

To make this distinction clear, claim 1 now recites that "each said clamping mechanism comprises a pair of relatively movable jaws"; that "each clamping mechanism is normally biased towards a closed position independently of other clamping mechanisms"; and that the "actuation means operable on the jaws against the closing biases for opening and closing said clamping mechanisms in unison. Such an arrangement is not taught nor suggested by Volkert. Volkert's gripper "pairs" (40A,40B,40C) are not biased towards a closed position independently of other pairs in the same bank and whereby the "actuation means" is required to act against the independent closing biases to effect opening and closing.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 as amended is neither anticipated by Volkert nor is rendered obvious in view of other cited references and a favorable reconsideration to this end is earnestly solicited. Dependent claims 3-8 and 16-20 include all of the limitations of claim 1 which patentably distinguishes over Volkert for the reasons given above and, accordingly, these claims are likewise believed to patentably distinguish over Leventry within the meaning of 35 U.S.C 102(a).

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /wab/
William A. Blake
Registration No. 30,548

JONES, TULLAR & COOPER, P.C.
P.O. Box 2266, Eads Station
Arlington, VA. 22202
(703) 415-1500
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